

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

DRAFTED BY S:WEGAN:LCK

APPROVED BY M:CEMCANAWAY

S/S PSBRIDGES

DESIRED DISTRIBUTION

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Z 201928Z SEP 76 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY FLASH

S E C R E T STATE 232904 TOSEC 270404

NODIS

FOR EAGLEBURGER EYES ONLY FROM MCMANAWAY AND EGAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OGEN, APER

SUBJECT: SILBERMAN AND THE BINDER ARTICLE

1. YOU WILL BE ASTOUNDED TO KNOW THAT THERE WERE NO QUESTIONS ON THE BINDER PIECE AT TODAY'S NOON BRIEFING. WE DO, HOWEVER, EXPECT SOME TOMORROW AND HAVE PROVIDED Q'S AND A'S FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION BELOW.

2. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE SECRETARY'S INITIAL REACTION TO THE BINDER STORY TRANSMITTED EARLIER TODAY FOUND ITS WAY TO BELGRADE; COVEY'S CALL NOTWITHSTANDING. THE SECTO WAS RECEIVED IN THE DEPARTMENT AT 0640 EDT. BELGRADE WAS AN ADDRESSEE AND CONSEQUENTLY THE MESSAGE WAS AUTOMATICALLY RETRANSMITTED TO THE POST. COVEY CALLED AT 806 EDT AND A FLASH SERVICE TO WITHDRAW THE MESSAGE WAS TRANSMITTED TO BELGRADE AT 0811 EDT. BELGRADE DID NOT REPLY UNTIL 0912 EDT AND THEN NOTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD ALREADY SEEN THE MESSAGE. THERE HAS BEEN NO DISTRI-

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BUTION IN THE DEPARTMENT.

3. NEEDLESS TO SAY, AMBASSADOR SILBERMAN HAS REPLIED. WE HAVE INSTRUCTED THAT HIS RESPONSE NOT BE REPEATED ROUTINELY TO THE PARTY AND IT HAS RECEIVED NO DISTRIBUTION HERE OUTSIDE S AND M. FULL TEXT OF THAT RESPONSE IS PROVIDED BELOW.

4. BEGIN TEXT OF BELGRADE 6159: THANK YOU FOR YOUR CABLE. I AM DUBIOUS AS TO THE RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATIONS BUT THE STORY IS REplete WITH FALSEHOODS. THREE OF WHICH I AM AWARE ARE AS FOLLOWS: (1) ALAN THOMPSON'S TRANSFER HAD BEEN DECIDED MONTHS BEFORE THE BLEED SPEECH AND CAME ABOUT IN PART BECAUSE HE FALSELY TOLD THE STORY IN WASHINGTON THAT I HAD LEAKED A TOW MISSILE STORY TO DUS"O DODER. (2) BINDER IMPLIES THAT WHEN I GAVE THE BLEED SPEECH I ALREADY KNEW THAT YUGOSLAVS HAD AGREED TO RELEASE TOTH "SOON." AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED, I DID NOT KNOW THAT BELOVSKI WAS TO APPEAR THAT AFTERNOON AT THE STATE DEPT IN WASHINGTON AT THE TIME I GAVE THE SPEECH, BUT THE YUGOSLAVS DID. I HAD GIVEN THEM SEVERAL DAYS NOTICE THAT I WOULD HAVE TO REFER TO TOTH IN THE SPEECH. (3) THE PHANTOM INSTRUCTIONS FROM YOU TO ME DIRECTING ME NOT TO PROVOKE ANY FURTHER ALTERCATIONS WITH THE YUGOSLAVS.

5. AS FOR THE REST OF THE STORY, I CERTAINLY HOPE IT IS NOT TRUE. MR. SECRETARY, I THINK IT IS TIME TO CHOOSE. I WILL AWAIT THE DEPARTMENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY. SILBERMAN. END TEXT.

6. PRESS GUIDANCE:

Q. WAS THERE A MOVE AT HIGH LEVELS IN THE DEPARTMENT TO REPRIMAND OR RECALL AMBASSADOR SILBERMAN?

A. NO. THE SECRETARY IS THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE RELEASE OF MR. TOTH, HAS DISCUSSED THE ISSUE DIRECTLY WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS AND AMBASSADOR SILBERMAN. AS I HAVE STATED PREVIOUSLY, THE SECRETARY HAS FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE AMBASSADOR, THE AMBASSADOR'S STAFF IN BELGRADE AND ALL THOSE OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THIS ISSUE IN THE DEPARTMENT. (OR ALTERNATIVELY) AMBASSADOR SILBERMAN WAS NOT REPRIMANDED; AS STATED PREVIOUSLY, THE AMBASSADOR HAS THE SECRETARY'S FULL
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CONFIDENCE. (IF ASKED WHETHER AN OFFICIAL REPRIMAND WAS CONSIDERED, SPOKESMAN WOULD REPLY THAT AS A MATTER OF POLICY WE DO NOT DISCUSS INTERNAL STATE DEPARTMENT POLICY OF PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS. THIS SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT THERE EVER WERE ANY SUCH CONSIDERATIONS.)

Q. WAS THE YUGOSLAV DESK OFFICER REASSIGNED AT AMBASSADOR

SILBERMAN'S REQUEST?

A. NO. THE AMBASSADOR NEVER MADE SUCH A REQUEST.

Q. WAS THE YUGOSLAV DESK OFFICER REASSIGNED AT THE DEPT'S INITIATIVE?

A. AS A MATTER OF POLICY WE DO NOT DISCUSS CONSIDERATIONS INVOLVED IN THE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE OR IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE.

Q. DID THE SECRETARY ORDER OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT NOT TO DISCUSS THE SILBERMAN ISSUE WITH THE PRESS?

A. NO.

Q. DID ANYONE ELSE DO SO IN HIS NAME?

A. NO. ROBINSON

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